1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

cõlõlõ, they will say, They have bewitched him with *oloseta*.[1] In going to the diviner they take a cock for the cure. They kill their cock, the diviner eats it, they (go) to the threshing-floor for the cure. That threshing-floor is holy and no one may pass over it unless in passing he spits out a little saliva and says, There may it stay, there. Only so may they pass on, even though they may be many, each person does just that.' The 'many' who go to the diviner are representatives of the family, for their presence is necessary not only for proper diagnosis but also to show their concern and good faith.

Babyhood Proper

(*From the second week until about the seventh month*)

The period of lying-in is terminated when the cord falls and the navel heals, but the second period only begins when the baby turns dark. This period begins with 'Breaking the pot' (*Oku ipaya ombia*). The reference is to the gourd or pot in which the beer and medicine have been kept. 'Breaking the pot', says one informant, 'means dividing the dark from the light.'

'When a child is first born he is perfectly pink and it is not possible to say whether he will be light or dark. When six or eight days have passed he begins to change and to get the skin with which he will grow. At that time they recognize whether the child will be light or dark. Then is the time when those who do not like to hold a pink baby will begin to take him up, for also it is then that his neck begins to be strong. Then too the baby begins to cause people to laugh. Should he be a boy, those who take him will say, Ah my husband are you well? Ha, how is the man? Then the parent will rejoice and say, Shucks, this man doesn't give any cloth at all. Should she be a girl, they will also say, How is my girl? The parent replies, She is quite well. The man then says, Where is a beer-jug for a man? The parent says, Shucks, your girl can't brew at all, she 's no good, they've just put her out of her house; they've just divorced her because she can't keep house properly.'

This period from about the eighth day until about the end of the sixth month is the period of babyhood proper. At night the baby sleeps with his mother and by day he is carried in a cloth on her back (*oku velekua*). When it is not raining his head may be seen

[1] *Olosseta* (plural) are a wild fruit, hard and about the size of hazel-nuts, used for playing *ocela*.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

sending of children to stay with relatives or friends. The Ovimbundu consider it definitely an educational device. From the age of six or seven years children are sent singly or in pairs to spend as much as one or two years in the home of the mother's brother. If conditions are favourable they may also be sent to stay with the father's sister or brother, and girls (other than the first-born) may be sent to the mother's mother. Formerly, prominent families arranged for their sons to stay in the king's capital. These periods spent away from home may continue well into adolescence. Not only relatives but also friends, blood-brothers, and *vakuacisoko* (members of a certain communal order)[1] exchange children for certain periods in this way. This custom is by no means dead. It is now being carried on even within the Christian community. Its educational purpose is obvious.

Later Childhood

(*From about nine years until puberty*)

There is no definite time which marks the transition from early to later childhood, but there are marked differences between the two periods. The chief criterion is one of physical development for as soon as the child is physically able, he will begin to assume a definite role in the work of the adult community. This rarely comes before nine years of age and may be somewhat delayed. Soon after a child gets the permanent teeth, a notch in the form of an inverted V (Λ) is chipped between the two upper front incisors.[2] This is a sort of national mark which many people omit to give their children at present. The line of observance is not sharply drawn as between Christians and non-Christians, as with the Herero.[3]

Formerly, the beginning of the period was well marked for the boy by his first trip with a trading caravan. Most of the present older generation have had this experience and nearly every man of the present middle-aged generation as well. Nowadays the boy of this age may begin to work in the fields with his father, he may begin to learn a trade, or he may be sent to school. Few Ovimbundu put their children in school before this age, and they evidently do not believe that younger children would profit by the instruction

[1] See *infra*, p. 114 f.
[2] See Hambly, op. cit., Plates XLIX and LIV.
[3] Vedder in Hahn *et al.*, op. cit., p. 177 f.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

sense, only a *potential* person. The permanency or stability of his personality (*unu*)[1] is only proven when he enters the state of adulthood at marriage. Then it is that he achieves true integration with society. Thus personality appears as a natural process of social integration.

On the other hand, the Umbundu belief in reincarnation[2] throws responsibility for determination of personality back upon the ancestral spirits (*olosuku*, *olosande*) or upon the Spirit World or Fate (*Kalunga*). Clearly this belief cuts across the assumption that children are born without definite character whereby the responsibility belongs to the parents. Practically the seeming contradiction seems to be resolved as follows: *potentially* a child's character may be pre-determined by the spirits, but actually or at least until the potentialities become manifest, education may play an important role by providing the spiritual forces with suitable vessels. At about eight or nine years of age the character of the reincarnation, if any, becomes manifest, but the social and psychological education is supposed to be well along by that time. Provision of the vessels and their moulding is, therefore, at the same time an active and a passive function.

The psychological and social education of early childhood and also the imparting of skills all have to do with this active moulding function as the manuscripts quoted have shown. Many folk-tales and proverbs could also be quoted to show the Umbundu ideas with regard to personality.[3]

The more passive function of providing suitable vessels for the indwelling of the spiritual forces is no less important. Even among those who have discarded or are seeking to discard the beliefs of their fathers, this side of educational theory is still important. It has greatly conditioned the outlook of the people. All observers have remarked on the considerate treatment of children by the Ovimbundu, on their recognition of personality in children and respect for it. In the narrative quoted this was seen in the mother's addressing her baby boy as 'little father'[4] and in the first visitors

[1] *Unu* lit. the quality of being a person (*omunu*). The word is used for one's dominant bent, or his character.

[2] See *supra*, p. 102, n. 4.

[3] I have identified about 100 Umbundu proverbs used in or having reference to education. About two-thirds of them deal with the period of early childhood. Their interest is about equally divided between the practical and the more philosophical aspects of life and education.

[4] See *supra*, p. 90.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

giving the baby the respectful terms of 'my wife' or 'my husband';[1] also in the comment of the narrator that 'parents recognize that it is proper to respect them (children)'[2] and in parents' reluctance to punish. It seems that this respectful treatment of children stems from belief in reincarnation, whereby a child is potentially an ancestor to be respected, deferred to, and even worshipped.

It is doubtful whether at present many children could be found who have really gone through the ceremonial for becoming media for guardian spirits of the family (*olosande*). The drift away from those observances has become a flood. Nevertheless respectful treatment of children remains, perhaps even undiminished, for it still has the force of customary behaviour if not the supernatural sanction. Indulgence on the part of the parents rarely if ever goes to the length of pampering. Belief that the child's character ultimately, or to a large extent, depends upon spiritual forces may lead parents to adopt a sort of fatalism, but that is hardly more serious than the effects of belief in the influence of heredity popularly held in the West. The Ovimbundu do not believe, as do the Zulus, for example, that a child is tainted at birth, needing radical treatment against the subsequent appearance of the taint.[3] With the Ovimbundu the development of personality is a process which *may* involve spiritual forces, but at all events requires careful human attention.

Education and Society

What then are the means by which the Ovimbundu develop the personalities of their children or mould them to the social norm? Their success indicates that they along with other 'so-called backward races have proved to be educationists . . . of no mean order'.[4] What, then, are their methods?

The educational process is the whole process of life and culture. School is society and society is school; there is no division between adult and child life. Education and life are one. This has been recognized as true for many African and other primitive societies.[5]

[1] *Supra*, p. 89.
[2] *Supra*, p. 104.
[3] See Krige, op. cit., p. 67.
[4] W. D. Hambly, *Origins of Education among Primitive Peoples* (London: Macmillan, 1926), p. 401.
[5] See the interesting analysis of M. Fortes, *Social and Psychological Aspects of Education in Taleland*, p. 8 f. (Supplement to *Africa*, Oct. 1938); Margaret

time to the village of the paramount chief. These periods spent away from home continue into adolescence. Not only relatives, but also friends, blood-brothers and *vakuacisoko* (see below) exchange children in this way.

Later childhood

No definite time marks the transition from early to later childhood, but there are marked differences between the two stages. As soon as the child is physically able, he begins to assume a definite role in the community. Soon after a child gets his permanent teeth, a notch in the form of an inverted V is chipped between the two upper front incisors. Formerly the beginning of the period was marked for the boy by his first trip with a trading caravan; today a boy of this age may begin to work in the fields with his father, or begin to learn a trade, or be sent to school. A girl starts to learn field-work and housework.

Professions

A boy is expected to learn the profession or *ocipinduko* in which his father or his mother's brother is expert, and after that, should he wish to learn some other side-line profession, he may apprentice himself. All children, both boys and girls, are expected to learn to cultivate, but that is not counted as a profession. The principal *ovipinduko* (professions) listed by Childs are: for girls, basket-making, pottery-making, medical practice and divination; for boys, mat-making, wood-working, rope-making, thatching, fishing, apiculture, hunting, smithing, and medical practice and divination. The last three, as has been mentioned above, are "sacred" and entered under special conditions.

"Later childhood, then, is the period of technical training during which it is expected that a large amount of economic responsibility will be assumed. A child begins to own property even before this, and from the beginning of childhood will be accounted legally responsible for his actions. It is recognised, however, that he should not be set tasks beyond the experience or ability of his age and that the full responsibility of adulthood will come only with marriage."(1)

The coming of European commerce, industry, and government has created new types of employment for boys and men, some of which cause a prolonged absence from the village and a loosening or severing of kinship ties. There are no estimates of the number of persons employed by Europeans, or the average length of their absence from home.

ADOLESCENCE(2)

Childs found that the onset of puberty was late among the Ovimbundu, coming between fourteen and sixteen years for girls and between fifteen and seventeen years for boys. Soon after puberty young people generally stop sleeping in the parents' house. The girls congregate in kitchens and each boy builds himself a house, in which he will live through adolescence

(1) Childs, op.cit., p.110.
(2) Based on Childs, op.cit., pp.58-9 and 111-18.

Men are exclusively the makers of 462
musical instruments, and males are the musicians. Men are the [534
only persons engaged in warfare and administration, and the *onjango* or council house is used exclusively by males. Men follow the [756]
occupation of medicine-man, in which there is considerable specialization. Female practitioners deal with pregnancy and women's ailments. In addition to the tasks for women mentioned above, the following are staple occupations: collecting firewood, drawing water, caring for infants, making pottery, weaving baskets, dancing, and singing. Young girls share these activities with older women.

The foregoing categories explain division on the grounds of sex. 463
Degrees of specialization are not so easy to formulate, but in general a man follows some one occupation, for example wood-carving. Then within this occupation there is specialization in the making of drums, domestic utensils, or figurines.

Almost any woman could make pottery or baskets, but the difference in skill leads naturally to concentration in the hands of expert potters and basket-weavers respectively. These sell their [432]
wares to those who either do not make such articles or are inept at the process.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT, MANNERS, AND SALUTATIONS

The parents of a child, also his maternal uncle, assume respon- 861
sibility for training in the precepts and standards given here. The 867
maternal uncle, who is the mother's oldest brother, is particularly interested because he has to pay fines should his sister's children commit thefts. The evidence indicates that the home and restricted family have formative influences over the conduct of children.

Children are beaten if they tell lies, answer old people rudely, or steal food. Ngonga says that his "stealing hand" was once placed in the hot leaves of the cooking pot. If a child steals an egg which is cooking, the hot egg is held between the culprit's hands.

One cannot fail to notice the quiet and unobtrusive way in which children sit in the presence of their elders both in the home and in the council house. Children do not speak when their elders are in [858]
conversation, unless addressed.

A child, likewise an adult, receives a gift with both hands. The [576]
implied idea is that reception with one hand is a depreciation of the gift. If a child holds out one hand, the hand is slapped. When receiving, an Ocimbundu says "*kuku*," literally grandfather or elder. Colloquially the word is used to mean greeting, "I thank you," or "I beg your pardon."